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The U.S. House of Representatives approved legislation (H.R. 289) authored by Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) and Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI) that will expand the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge along the Lake Erie shoreline to encompass more critical wildlife habitat.

“The House of Representatives has placed two more precious jewels on the green necklace of the Lake Erie shoreline, said Kaptur. “Expansion of these two important refuges will spur eco-tourism, benefiting the residents of Ohio and Michigan and protect our beautiful and indigenous wildlife.”

“Today we are one step closer to implementing the keystones of our conservation vision for the Lake Erie shoreline,” said Dingell. “It’s a big win for conservationists, wildlife enthusiasts and the residents of Southeastern Michigan and Northern Ohio. The seven million ducks and geese that migrate through the area annually will be particularly grateful.”

The innovative legislation encourages public-private partnerships for conservation and restoration of wildlife habitat along the Detroit River and southern shore of Lake Erie while placing special emphasis on the protection of private property rights. Landowners will have the opportunity to enter into cooperative management agreements, sell and even donate land to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who will manage the refuge lands for public recreation, wildlife observation, hunting and fishing.

“There is precious little remaining undeveloped wildlife habitat along the Lake Erie Shoreline, and there is a great urgency to protect it,” added Dingell. “Lake Erie is an invaluable resource that is essential to our economy, provides numerous recreational opportunities, and is central to our quality of life.”

“We want families to enjoy the roller coasters at Cedar Point and then drive a few miles to see the bald eagles at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge,” said Kaptur. “We want tourists to enjoy not only some of the greatest fishing in the world in the Central and Western basins of Lake Erie, but also some of the greatest bird-watching in the world at Ottawa and the Lake Erie Islands.”